

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

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COME-00 AGR-03 EUR-10 RSR-01 /077 W

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R 212300 Z JUN 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4630

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 2296

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PINT HO

SUBJ: RUMORS ABOUT TROUBLE IN HONDURAS

REF: MANAGUA 2783

SUMMARY: LOPEZ MALDONADO'S OPINIONS ON GOH REFLECT HIS
POLITICAL AFFILIATION AND SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.
END SUMMARY.

1. HONDURAN AMBASSADOR LOPEZ MALDONADO HAS GIVEN
AMBASSADOR SHELTON IN ONE SITTING A RESUME OF THE
ANTI- GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA WHICH ZUNIGA AND NATIONALIST
PARTY ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN SPREADING IN HONDURAS FOR THE
LAST FEW MONTHS.

2. LOPEZ HAS LONG HISTORY IN EARLY AND MID- SIXTIES
AS NATIONALIST PARTY PROPAGANDIST AND EDITOR OF PARTY
NEWSPAPER. UNTIL 1971 HE SERVED SEVERAL YEARS AS GOH
CONSUL IN SAN JOSE, BUT WAS RECALLED IN EARLY 1971
TO SERVE ON NATIONALIST PARTY ELECTION STAFF. DURING
1971 ELECTION HE EMERGED AS PERHAPS MOST FANATICAL
PARTISAN INVOLVED IN CAMPAIGN. IN 1971 HE WAS APPOINTED
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AMBASSADOR TO NICARAGUA.

3. HE IS REPORTEDLY NEPHEW OF GENERAL LOPEZ, BUT WE BELIEVE HE HAS LITTLE OR NO PERSONAL CONTACT WITH GENERAL. THIS RELATIONSHIP MAY EXPLAIN HIS UNINTERRUPTED TENURE UNDER THE NEW GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH IN FACT MOST HONDURAN DIPLOMATS ABROAD HAVE BEEN LEFT IN PLACE ANYWAY.

4. AS PROFESSIONAL PROPAGANDIST, LOPEZ IS NOT KNOWN FOR FASTIDIOUS OR OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS. DURING 1971 ELECTION HE TOOK LINE WITH EMBASSY, WHICH WAS ECCENTRIC AND EXTREME EVEN WITHIN NATIONALIST CIRCLES, TO EFFECT THAT LIBERAL PARTY VICTORY WOULD CAUSE COMMUNIST TAKE-OVER OF COUNTRY. IN 1966 HE WROTE EDITORIAL BLAMING "STATE DEPARTMENT LEFTISTS" FOR OPPOSING LOPEZ COUP OF 1963, WHICH SAVED HONDURAS FROM LIBERAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH "CASTRO- COMMUNIST" REGIME.

5. HIS PRESENTATION TO AMBASSADOR SHELTON IS AT MUCH THE SAME LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION. IT FOLLOWS THE ZUNIGA LINE THAT GENERAL LOPEZ MUST "LEGITIMIZE" HIS TENURE BY SOME SORT OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, WHICH WOULD VIRTUALLY HAVE TO INCLUDE SOME POLITICAL PARTY PARTICIPATION. GIVEN HIS TOTAL CONTROL OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY, THIS WOULD OF COURSE RE- INTRODUCE ZUNIGA INTO POLITICAL PROCESS.

6. IT IS POINTLESS TO REBUT HIS CONFUSED STORY IN DETAIL, BUT FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS ARE RELEVANT:

7. GENERAL LOPEZ ENJOYS MAJORITY IF NOT ALMOST COMPLETE SUPPORT OF OFFICER CORPS. THERE ARE SOME INTERNAL ANIMOSITIES AND RIVALRIES, BUT THEY DO NOT AFFECT THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE GENERAL. THERE IS NO PARTICULAR DISAFFECTION IN THE AIR FORCE.

8. OFFICER CORPS IS DEVELOPMENT- AND PRODUCTION- MINDED AND HAS NO SINGLE IDEOLOGICAL BIAS. THEY HAVE DELIBERATELY CHOSEN LARGELY CIVILIAN GROUP OF INNOVATIVE TECHNOCRATS WHO SEEM MORE ORIENTED TO BRAZILIAN THAN TO LEFTIST
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PATTERNS. WHAT OFFICERS HAVE ABSORBED FROM BRAZILIAN, PANAMANIAN AND PERUVIAN EXPERIENCE IS IDEA OF EXCLUDING TRADITIONAL LATIN POLITICAL PARTIES FROM GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR CORRUPTION AND UNRESPONSIVENESS TO POPULAR WILL. FAR FROM RESENTING THE CIVILIAN MINISTERS, THE SUPREME DEFENSE COUNCIL ENDORSED THE GOVERNMENT IN LAST MEETING OF MAY 28 (TEGUCIGALPA 1992). FURTHER,

AT THIRD BATTALION (SAN PEDRO SULA) ANNIVERSARY CEREMONIES
LAST WEEK (SAN PEDRO), SPEECH OF BATTALION AND ZONE
COMMANDER COL ANGEL GARCIA WAS DEVOTED ALMOST ENTIRELY
TO PRAISE OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, ITS GOALS FOR
HONDURAS AND PROGRESS TO DATE, AND WAS MET BY
ENTHUSIASTIC APPLAUSE FROM THE ASSEMBLED OFFICERS OF ALL
KEY COMMANDS.

9. ADMITTEDLY, LARGER LANDOWNERS ARE UNHAPPY ABOUT PEASANT
LAND RESETTLEMENTS, BUT LATTER HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT
ON RELATIVELY MODEST SCALE AND WITH CERTAIN GUARANTEES
FOR LANDHOLDERS. MANY TERRATENIENTES WERE ONLY
SQUATTING ON PUBLIC LANDS. OUR ANALYSIS IN TEGUCIGALPA
1688 STILL STANDS.

10. BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS SPLIT IN ITS ATTITUDES
TOWARDS GOVERNMENT, BUT THERE ARE MANY BUSINESSMEN
SUPPORTERS. THERE IS IN FACT A LIKELIHOOD OF INCREASED
UNIONIZATION AND A MINIMUM WAGE FOR URBAN WORKERS AND
EXPANSION OF WORKERS COVERED BY JOB SECURITY AND
SEVERANCE PAY PROVISIONS OF LABOR CODE, AND THIS MAKES
SOME 19 TH CENTURY CAPITALISTS UNEASY. HOWEVER, DECREE
PROJECTED FOR NEAR FUTURE TO RESTORE TAX EXEMPTIONS AND
INCENTIVES CUT BACK DURING CRUZ REGIME WILL ALSO BOOST
GOH POPULARITY IN BUSINESS SECTOR. GENERALLY SPEAKING,
MOST ACTIVE COMPLAINANTS HAVE BEEN SMALL GROUP OF BUSI-
NESS SECTOR WHO UNWISELY ASSOCIATED THEMSELVES DIRECTLY
WITH ZUNIGA IN MAY 1972 UNDER PAST GOVERNMENT. THEY HAVE
SINCE BEEN UNHAPPY ABOUT LOSS OF SOME UNUSUAL PRIVILEGES
WHICH THEY ENJOYED FROM THIS RELATIONSHIP.

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INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4631
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

SECRET SECTION 2 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 2296

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11. UNIVERSITY IS INDEED COMMUNIST- DOMINATED (ALTHOUGH THE EXTREMIST INROADS WERE MADE DURING TWO PREVIOUS NATIONALIST- PARTY- LED ADMINISTRATIONS AND WERE HELPED ALONG BY ZUNIGA' S ON- CAMPUS INTRIGUES AND BULLY- BOY TACTICS); CATHOLIC CLERGY LIKEWISE INCLUDES SOME RADICAL LEFTISTS WHO RESIST THE ARCHBISHOP' S GENTLE ATTEMPTS TO INSTILL THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE. HOWEVER, ON THE WHOLE, THE VAST MAJORITY OF THOSE EXERTING ANY SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON THE GOVERNMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE CAN BE TERMED MODERATE AND THE LARGEST ORGANIZED GROUPS (THE UNIONS AND ANACH) ARE PRO- PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND PRO- US- ORIENTED).

12. MILITARY GOVERNMENT SEES HONDURAS' LARGE CAMPESINO POPULATION AS AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT POWER BASE, AND BELIEVES THIS AND OTHER SOCIETAL SECTORS, E. G. LABOR, BUSINESS, CAN PROVIDE A MORE GENUINE MASS SUPPORT THAN CAN BE MUSTERED BY THE ENTRENCHED POLITICAL PARTY PROFESSIONALS WHO HAVE LOST CONSIDERABLE CREDIBILITY. IT WAS, AFTER ALL, CAMPESINO MOVEMENT WHICH TOPPLED LAST GOVERNMENT OF THE TWO PARTIES.

13. TEGUCIGALPA 2286 DEALS WITH SOME BACKGROUND
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RELEVANT TO LOPEZ MALDONADO' S LINE.

14. PICTURE AS PAINTED BY MALDONADO IS GIVEN US FREQUENTLY AND WITH SIMILAR INTENSITY BY OTHER PN AND PN- LINKED FIGURES. EMBASSY STANCE IS USUALLY TO LISTEN WITH APPARENT ABSORBED INTEREST, LIMITING OVERT SKEPTICISM TO OCCASIONAL SPECIFIC QUESTIONS WHICH USUALLY BRING A TONING DOWN OF SOME EXAGGERATED GENERALITY PREVIOUSLY STATED. FACT THAT CAMPAIGN TO INFLUENCE US HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO INCLUDE DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS ELSEWHERE IS VERY INTERESTING, HOWEVER, AS GREATLY APPRECIATE HAVING AMBASSADOR SHELTON' S REPORT. IT IS, OF COURSE, IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT EVOLUTION OF GOVERNMENT OR THE LONG- TERM PROSPECTS, SINCE AFTER ONLY SEVEN MONTHS ITS POLICIES ARE FAR FROM DEFINITIVE. UP TO NOW, HOWEVER, ITS APPROACH HAS BEEN GRADUALIST AND PRAGMATIC, AND NOT AT ALL WILD OR IDEOLOGICAL.
SANCHEZ

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